



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2015-108  
**Date:** December 31, 2015  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 898 Broadway

**Applicant Name:** Amanda Parisi  
**Applicant Address:** 898 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Owner Name:** Amanda Parisi  
**Owner Address:** 898 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Alderman:** Lance Davis

Legal Notice: Applicant & Owner, Amanda Parisi, seeks a special permit to alter a nonconforming structure to add a dormer to and alter windows on a single-family house. RA zone. Ward 6.

Dates of Public Hearing: January 6, 2016

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 2,358 square foot single-family house on a 3,630 square foot lot. The structure has three bedrooms and an unfinished basement and attic.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to add a 10.9 foot shed dormer on the rear of the house and modify three windows on the third floor to make code compliant windows. The third floor will contain a bedroom, bathroom, and storage space.
3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.
4. Comments:



*Fire Prevention:* Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors will be required on the third floor.

*Inspectional Services:* Inspectional Services asked that the architect to check the energy code considering the number of windows proposed.

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman Gewirtz and Alderman-Elect Davis have been contacted regarding the proposal.



## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1):**

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

### **1. Information Supplied:**

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

### **2. Compliance with Standards: *The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."***

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: rear and side yard setbacks.

The proposal will impact the nonconforming side yard setback. The house is 5.2 feet from the side property line and the dormer will be just less than the required 8 feet to this side property line. This

alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that “[l]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The dormer has been designed to be less than 50% of the length of the sloping roof to which it is attached, keeping the structure technically at 2 ½ stories. The floor area ratio will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO. With the increase in one bedroom to establish a four-bedroom house, the parking requirement does not change from the current requirement of two parking spaces.

3. Consistency with Purposes: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."*

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to providing for and maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City and the purpose of the RA district in altering this single-family home.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."*

The dormer has been designed to be a small element on the roof that does not greatly alter the appearance of the house as a 2 ½ story structure. It will be setback from the main wall and down from ridge of the house. The dormer will have three awning windows that fill the dormer wall. Adding an appropriately designed dormer to use a portion of the attic space of a single-family house is compatible with the neighborhood. The change in three window dimensions on third floor will allow for sill heights that meet the current building code. The window style will be match the existing windows, which are compatible with the rest of the windows on the house.

7. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

The increase in living space of the house will make it more expensive; however, the house is not restricted as an affordable unit. The additional living space will make the house more viable for a family to live here, which is another housing type desired in the city.

8. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are*

*outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

The property is in an area that is to be conserved in the SomerVision map. A single-family house is a building type that fits in with the conservation goal and also the policy of allowing neighborhood properties to adapt and change to meet the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the neighborhood.

<u><i>SomerVision Summary</i></u>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	1	1

**III. RECOMMENDATION****Special Permit under §4.4.1**

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	Approval is for the addition of a dormer on the rear of the house. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD / Plng.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>Dec 14, 2015</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>Oct 2, 2015 (Dec 17, 2015)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Proposed Plot Plan)</td></tr><tr><td>Oct 25, 2015 (Dec 17, 2015)</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (D1.1 Existing plans, D1.2 Existing Plans &amp; Section, D2.1 Existing Elevations, A1.1 Proposed Dormer Plans &amp; Sections, A2.1 Proposed Elevations)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Dec 14, 2015	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Oct 2, 2015 (Dec 17, 2015)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Proposed Plot Plan)	Oct 25, 2015 (Dec 17, 2015)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (D1.1 Existing plans, D1.2 Existing Plans & Section, D2.1 Existing Elevations, A1.1 Proposed Dormer Plans & Sections, A2.1 Proposed Elevations)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
2	The siding of the dormer and around the new windows shall match in material and color with the main body of the house.	BP/CO	ISD / Plng.									
Final Sign-Off												
3	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.									

